

BEIJING TODAY

今日北京

PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY

February 4 2011-February 10 2011

NO. 504 CN11-0120

HTTP://WWW.BEIJINGTODAY.COM.CN

CHIEF EDITOR:
JIAN RONG
NEWS EDITOR:
YU SHANSHAN
DESIGNER: ZHAO YAN

北京青年报
BEIJING YOUTH DAILY

Surviving as New Beijingers



Beijing is no longer the old city of legend, and it's time we all accept that. Today it is a home that accepts people from all over the country and all over the world, and a home that is shaped by the cultures of its immigrants.

These people are the New Beijingers, and while they may share the same sky as their traditional predecessors, they see it with very different eyes. This spring, *Beijing Today* has collected stories from some of the city's new residents who work in a variety of occupations. They have come up with some creative solutions to the common problems of doing business, finding work and avoiding feeling lonely and alienated in this city of millions.

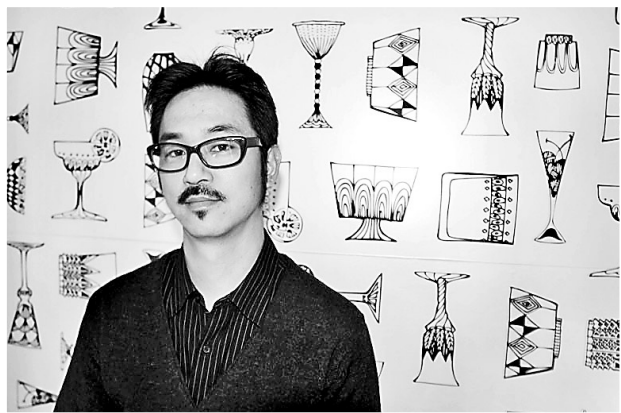
The Tu'er Ye, a clay figurine of the rabbit god, is one of the oldest symbols of Beijing. This year, it has become a symbol of the capital's hardworking immigrants, whom Beijingers refer to as "Ye" in recognition of their determination.

The stories of their perseverance and excellence can be an example by which we reexamine our own lives to make some positive changes.

Check the back pages to learn how *Beijing Today* has been covering this rapidly changing community, and how it will continue to do so in its 10th year.

Under the auspices of the office of Beijing Municipal Government ■ Run by Beijing Youth Daily ■ President: Zhang Yanping ■ Editor in Chief: Zhang Yabin ■ Executive Deputy Editor in Chief: He Pingping
■ Director: Jian Rong ■ Price: 2 yuan per issue ■ 26 yuan for 3 months ■ Address: No. 23, Building A, Baijiazhuang Dongli, Chaoyang District, Beijing, China ■ Zip Code: 100026 ■ Telephone/Fax: (010)65902525
■ E-mail: bjtoday@ynet.com ■ Hotline for subscription: (010)67756666(Chinese), (010)65902626(English) ■ Overseas Code Number: D1545 ■ 邮发代号: 1-364 ■ Overseas Distribution Agent: China International Book Trading Corporation

Bar owner's life one of constant change



Leon Lee wants to change the way Beijing thinks about drinks at his bar. Photos by Liu Xi

By Zhang Dongya

A Western restaurant seems like the natural choice for a foreigner looking to start a business in Beijing, but running one is hard work.

Leon Lee, 37, a Chinese American from San Francisco, knows all about that. Last year he opened Apothecary, a restaurant bar. Hailed as "Bar of the Year" by several English magazines serving the expat community, Apothecary may get a second location in Shanghai this year.

"Beijing has been my home for almost seven years and I consider it home. I chose Beijing because it is the seat of politics and the epicenter of culture. What keeps me here is that I can grow with this city and China as a country. It's a chance to be active in making history in a way that isn't possible in the US," Lee said.

He is determined to see Apothecary go down in the record books.

Inspired by traditional medicine

Lee came to Beijing as the founder and former director of SambAsia Beijing, the country's only active Brazilian drumming ensemble. He opened Apothecary because he and business partner Max Levy were picky eaters, and he believed in the market potential for fine cuisine.

"We were dearly missing the kinds of places we liked to eat and drink. After pining for them over and over again, we thought, why not take a leap and open a place like the ones we used to frequent in New York City and San Francisco?" he said.

The name of the bar was inspired by an acupuncture session Lee had with a doctor surnamed Zhang. Zhang joked that it would be great if he could make some extra cash offering traditional massage at Lee's soon-to-be bar, but that his medicinal massages might be misconstrued for sexual services.

Lee said the bar of his dreams was not that kind of bar, but that it would be a refined version of his previous OT Bar, where original and classic cocktails were made with house bitters.

"Maybe it was the effects of the needles on my energy flow, but I decided to name it Apothecary. It's what cocktails were in the beginning and should be today," he said.

Apothecary mixes more than 150 cocktails and is changing the way Beijing thinks about drinks: they can be for more than getting hosed.

They also developed a food menu featuring the cuisine of New Orleans, hoping to change perceptions that American food can be best summed up as McValue meal.



Apothecary was dubbed "Bar of the Year" in 2010 by several English magazines serving the expat community.

Changes in a changing city

Lee said he sees America as a slow-paced country compared to China. A recent visit to San Francisco after seven years in the capital revealed that nothing had changed except the hairstyles.

When he was in high school, Lee learned how to cook, serve, wash dishes and play host at a French restaurant owned by his family. His business partner Levy had two years of experience running a restaurant in Beijing, giving them a head start in figuring out how to appeal to locals.

Still, there were many unexpected difficulties.

The first and most complicated

was getting a permit. To open a Wholly Foreign Owned Enterprise (WFOE) that serves food and beverages, the procedure and process was time-consuming and illogical. WFOEs and locally-owned companies are also subject to different hygienic regulations and building requirements.

Finding good staff was another big problem, due to how service is viewed in China. In San Francisco, waiters and servers in restaurants are graduate students, artists and those supplementing their existing non-traditional careers. But in Beijing, as Apothecary learned, university students are the worst

workers. Migrant workers are the best, because they come ready to learn and work without many complaints.

"Bar service is still not recognized as a professional concept like other careers. We try to train our staff to have self-respect and confidence in their place in society before training them for the actual job of waiting, serving, cooking and bartending," Lee said.

"We tried our best to offer a corporate culture that is fair, supports our employees' efforts to better themselves and offers the resources to keep them learning and growing," he said.

As easy and as difficult

Apothecary changed Lee's life last year and freed him from working for a boss – something he said he was not very good at.

He and his partner plan to start serving lunch and brunch at Apothecary this year and to open a second bar in Shanghai in March. Apothecary Shanghai will continue Beijing's formula with limited changes to its design and decoration.

"Every place we open is living – there will always be changes, growth and something new because we are interested in taking each and every thing as far as it

can go," Lee said. "We will always seek out the best products, learn new techniques, test old recipes, create new cocktails and update old ones so they are better."

In his spare time, when the weather is warm, Lee likes to ride his bike around Beijing. "It is one of my favorite and 'geilivable' activities," he said. Every year he gets a new bike, and every year it is stolen.

"I still love walking around inside Second Ring Road and getting lost in the hutong. That is something I miss when I'm not in Beijing," he said.



Beginning a new life in the city of possibilities

By Wang Yu

Beijing is a city of opportunity. Its scene attracts talents from across the country and all parts of the world. However, the business environment is changing. It's not as easy for a foreigner to find a job these days as it was 10 years ago. Many now face competition from locals, and it's taking longer for them to fit in with the local scene.

Creativity and passion, the traditional keys to success, are more vital now than ever, especially for new arrivals who have come with grand ambitions for a new life. The city doesn't lack energy; the challenge – and thrill – is keeping up.

A model living his dream in Beijing

By Wang Yu

The growth of the Chinese fashion industry has attracted both big brands and foreign models. British model Andy Parker is among those from overseas trying to break into the emerging scene.

Parker moved to Beijing from Yorkshire. He graduated from the chemistry department of the University of York and worked in London before coming to China.

He first got into modeling while in college for the university magazine after the fashion editor saw his picture on Facebook. The photo shoot led to more work, and before he knew it, he was a professional model.

"The reason I wanted to be a model was because I thought it would be a good opportunity to travel," Parker said. "I knew I wanted to move aboard. At the time I was very curious about East Asia, in particular China. In terms of modeling work, China is an emerging market, and it seems exciting to be here at this time and to be part of the development."

Parker's first local runway show was for Xander Zhou's show, Signature, last year. It was a nerve-racking experience for Parker because there were many famous Chinese models involved. At that time Parker had a spinal infection

that made it painful to walk, but the show was such a big opportunity that he could not turn it down.

The pain was worth it: new offers soon came as agents saw Parker's potential. He soon integrated with the local scene.

"Many aspects of (modeling) work here are different from those in London," he said. "For example, castings here are very different. It seems like there are more opportunities to get a job here, because usually in London there are fewer people at castings; here, everyone goes to almost all the same castings."

"I really like Chinese models in terms of both the way they look and their attitudes at work. They are professional, and unlike many of the foreign models, they are happy all the time."

It can be both easy and challenging to start a career in Beijing – it really depends on the person. If a model comes here from abroad with the right look, he can work right away. And if he becomes popular, money will soon flow. But those who have no experience will find it harder to get started.

On the other hand, it also depends on the type of model. In Beijing, fashion models have it tougher than commercial models.

"The local fashion scene is very

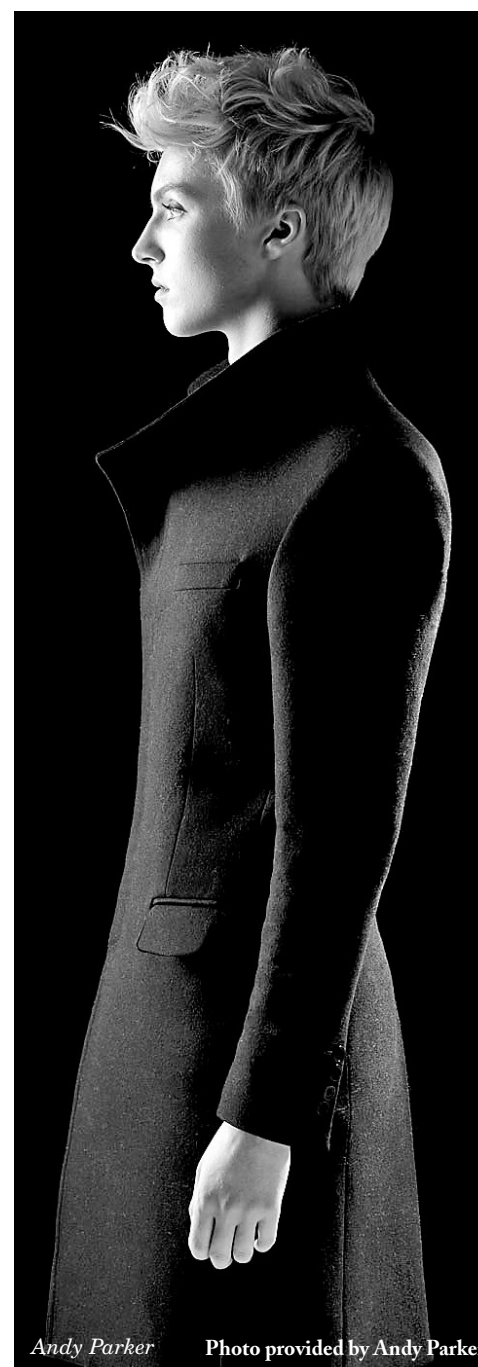
interesting to me," Parker said.

"I think China is an emerging market, as there are so many new designers and people trying experimental things. People in the fashion industry generally dress very well, and have a very good sense of style, though I am so over-seeing Chinese female fashionists sporting the one-side-of-their-head-shaved style. It stops being original when everyone does it."

Parker is always compared with British actor Tom Felton, who plays Draco Malfoy in Harry Potter. But the model has no plans to try acting. He loves to explore the city, run around with a camera and try new food. His curiosity and passion push him to try new things all the time.

Parker hopes to work a long time in Beijing. He wants to do a lot of photo shoots for magazines, which is his favorite part of modeling.

"I think that when I'm older and not really able to model anymore, I'd like to stay in Beijing and work here," he said. "I have a degree in chemistry. Recently I heard about a company called Greening the Beige, dedicated to environmental issues, and that's exactly why I went to university in the first place. Hopefully in a few years, I'll be doing something like that here."



Andy Parker

Photo provided by Andy Parker

Norwegians create popular social network in Beijing



Ole Marius Loset at a WLIB event.



Photo provided by Ole Marius Loset

By Wang Yu

Two years ago, when Ole Marius Loset and Joakim Lund Rangel, co-founders of the social network site WeLiveInBeijing, moved to the city to start their new business, they felt like they were on a thrilling journey with a future that was completely unclear.

Their worries were put to rest in no time. The site quickly became one of the most popular online communities for Chinese and expat users in Beijing.

Loset, who is also the creative direc-

tor, has collaborated with several Norwegian design firms, while Rangel has worked on various gaming and social networking projects. Among them is Norwegian Mafia, which in 2003 was named Norway's Best Internet Browser Game, and later Most Addictive Game Strategy.

Like other IT company operators, Loset and Rangel had humble beginnings: they created a Norwegian online community called Bloc in college in 2004. "During the first years, it was more like a hobby since we didn't really think of making a profit. It

was more for learning," Loset said. "When I look back on it now, we didn't have a clue what we were doing."

Bloc's membership and traffic grew so rapidly that it exceeded the capacity of its homemade software. In 2006, the founders turned to Chinese specialists for a new platform because it was very hard to find good developers in Norway. Their growing links to China led them to pack their bags and head to Beijing in March 2008.

"It feels great to start a new business in Beijing," Rangel said. "It's been exciting and I think we all feel that we have learned a lot. To think that this whole adventure started from a small discussion during a Christmas dinner in 2007, to leave everything behind and move to Beijing just a few months later, has been the most exciting thing I have ever done."

The beta version of WeLiveInBeijing was launched in the summer of 2008, but the site did not start growing significantly until 2009. By working with local nightlife venues, it grew fast from 13,000 members to 40,000 in one month in early 2009.

When Loset and Rangel launched WeLiveInBeijing, the idea was to reach out to the city's expats. But the site generated an enthusiastic response among Chinese

people, which made the team realize they needed to focus on locals as well.

However, WeLiveInBeijing is far more than a social network site. It is being developed as a platform for people who want to start similar websites.

"In the past two years we have continued working with our AppLaunch platform, which WeLiveInBeijing is built on top of. And finally, after three years of work, AppLaunch is ready for launch," Rangel said.

"This means that after Chinese New Year we'll start distributing licenses for the Chinese market, and others can start their own WeLiveInBeijing websites from just 160 yuan per month. We hope that the work we have done with the site will be inspire future customers."

Now their company is receiving daily emails from startups and established companies and organizations who are interested in the model. WeLiveInBeijing has become a model website.

"I think we have been very lucky," Rangel said. "Our plan in 2011 is to establish the support and sales. We work with people from many nationalities, but people are not that different. That's what impressed me the most during these past few years in Beijing."

Leading a healthy life in Beijing

By Li Zhixin

Vimbayi Kajese, a Zimbabwean, has been a news presenter for the last year and a half on CCTV News. Like local Beijingers, she works hard to earn a living in the city.

Already five years into her life in Beijing, Kajese has adapted to the city. But as a new Beijinger, her philosophy of life is simple: to lead a healthy life. Whatever she does, she puts health as her top priority.

An early bird

Kajese is the early morning news presenter on CCTV News. Her shift is between 4 and 8:30 am, and she has to wake up at 1:30 am to get ready.

"It means having to overcome my body clock and look alert early in the morning," she said.

Each second before the live broadcast is extremely tense. Her hair, makeup and the scripts must be done by 3:55. "Three minutes before the start, I have to position myself in front of the camera and go over stories with the director through the earpiece and clear my throat," she said.

At 4 am on the dot, after the CCTV themes fade out, she appears to read the broadcast headlines. She repeats the process again and again until 8:30 am.

Because she doesn't prepare her own scripts, it's sometimes challenging to convey the same feeling as the original author of the script. After her last show, she walks over to the next-door hotel and makes up for any sleep she didn't get while waiting for rush hour traffic to subside. She wakes up at noon. "I go back east, combine lunch with an interview and meeting with friends, I work-out, check my mail, watch the news, meditate and prepare for bed by 6:30 pm," she says.

Kajese said her job schedule is brutal to her body. Because she works against nature's clock, she's had to find different ways of making her health a priority. She said with a laugh, recalling what her friends have to put up with as a result of her erratic sleep schedule, "I have no qualms about taking a public nap if my body needs one right there and then. Even during dinner at a restaurant."

She said she can't afford to get a cold, especially because it always affects her voice. She therefore avoids smokers, keeps out of polluted air, eats and drinks her veggies, does pilates, swims and jogs. And to cope with the daily stresses of Beijing life, Kajese has learned to use her iPod to meditate in traffic, catch up on rest and center herself, repeating her goals for the day and her life.

Despite challenges and the huge pressure, Kajese enjoys and appreciates her job. "I love the news. I love to watch it and talk about it," she said.

She likes the international atmosphere that CCTV provides with Chinese and expat coworkers from a variety of English-speaking countries. When commenting about how she gets along with everybody, she noted, "It's a fairly friendly environment and we're all learning to adjust to each other's working style."

Her fans span the world and interacting with them is the highlight of Kajese's day. Many send her funny stories about how they first reacted when they saw her on TV. Many have expressed how they are starting to consider China a safe place for people of color to live.

Several viewers have told her seeing her on TV inspired them to change their lives. These messages come at times when Kajese feels too exhausted to continue with her schedule, and they in turn inspire her. "I've realized that showing up to work is not just about me anymore: there's a bigger picture to all of this," she said.



Kajese poses for a promotional trailer for her CCTV program.

Photos provided by Vimbayi Kajese

Focused on her values

Getting her job was no easy task.

After graduating from China Foreign Affairs University in 2008, Kajese experienced the same run-around hunting for work in a recession. "At one point I was strapped for cash, with no apartment, surfing on my friends' couches."

While in between jobs at a news agency she looked up at the TV one day and saw there was no African representation on CCTV. Considering the extent of Sino-African relations, she decided to get in touch to let them know she was interested.

After a long silence and a few screen tests, voice training sessions, prayer and positive thinking, she was finally cast as an anchor.

Kajese's had her fair share of bad Beijing relationships. Her first one when she arrived was very unhealthy: it almost completely destroyed her self-confidence and her outlook on life in Beijing.

With the help of a supportive



She was appointed as cultural ambassador by the government.

family and the new friends she made, she began to change how she thought and felt about herself and started putting out more of the positive things that she'd lacked in that relationship. In a short time, things turned around for her. "It's important for women especially to know your power and never give it away," she said.

Years of bittersweet experiences in the city have reminded her of



Kajese is a CCTV news anchor.

New expectations

For being the only African face on CCTV and her involvement with YAPS and The Charitarian, Kajese was honored as a Cultural Ambassador by the Chinese government at the end of last year.

"I want to promote everything positive about China-Africa relations and to help eliminate misunderstandings between our nations through interactive, entertaining and creative events," she said.

In the year of the rabbit, Kajese has some new plans besides playing a bigger role in helping CCTV News grow in its coverage of Africa and other emerging markets and being more proactive in her community service commitments.

"I expect to travel more. I want to get to know China and my continent better," she said. She also plans to participate in more of Beijing's diplomatic events and help out more with her embassy, especially when delegations from her country visit.

Kajese also plans to be more proactive in improving Africa's image in the media.

"The media's portrayal of Africa is so deplorable that I want to showcase those positive stories that aren't told stories of the can-do people that don't just sit there and wait for aid donors. A lot of these can-doers are young thought leaders who are here in Beijing, they are part of what enriches the Beijing dynamic," she said.

the importance of unity and building a centralized platform for networking and information among young Africans in China. In 2009, she and her friends founded Young African Professionals and Students (YAPS) to help Africans and Chinese integrate better.

She also volunteers as a commentator to The Charitarian, a philanthropy and CSR magazine. She said China is doing a lot to lead the way for emerging markets and she enjoys thinking up ways and strategies to advise companies and NGO here on how they can do business the right way: the community-way.

She is also passionate about women and children's issues, and is looking to get involved in those areas. As a way of engaging more in Beijing life she said "There's nothing more fulfilling than taking a bus early in the morning with a bunch of strangers to go play with kids at an orphanage."

Social care creates new opportunities

By Wang Yu

Though the concept of social enterprises is still new and the scene is in its youth in China, local fair trade brand founders and charity shop owners have proved the possibility of the concept. In Beijing, more and more people have noticed that they can do a good deed while buying quality products.

But it's a tough job for those who want to get involved in the market. Unlike common shop and brand owners, they must compete as promoters against businesses with far more money. But their hard work and dedication has driven the scene to amazing growth during the last few years.



Coffee, honey, botanicals for charity

By Wang Yu

Shangrila Farms, a social enterprise based in Beijing, promotes fair-trade and supports small farmers in Yunnan Province.

Founded by Sahra and Alia Malik from New York, the brand offers products such as organic coffee, honey and botanicals at 50 shops and shopping malls in the city. As one of the most successful fair trade brands in the city, Shangrila Farms has also proved the viability of its business model.

In 2003, the Malik sisters came to China to join their mother, who runs Yunnan Mountain Heritage Foundation, an NGO in Yunnan's Shangri-La region. Alia studied development economics at Georgetown University and obtained her master's at Cambridge University. Coming from that background, she was keen to start up a social business.

Before she came to China, she worked for NGOs in Kenya. Sahra, who was then working full-time in advertising and graphic design, decided to quit her job to join.

In 2008, they invited organic beekeeping experts to instruct the farmers. A few months later, the young women came across a local farmers' roasting co-op. Its delicious coffee inspired them to support the efforts of small coffee-bean farmers.

The sisters are guided by fair trade philosophy, a market-based approach that aims to help producers in developing



Sahra and Alia Malik Photo provided by Sahra Malik

countries obtain better trading conditions and promote sustainability. It advocates the payment of a higher price to producers as well as adherence to social and environmental standards.

Besides coffee, the farmers also produce honey and botanical products like cold-crafted soaps. The raising of bees to produce bee-based products helps to take pressure off the environment, to promote biodiversity through pollination and to ease women's burdens by allowing them to work closer to home.

A portion of the company's earnings are donated to the foundation to train more farmers. Shangri-La has also employed young professionals who live in the village to train its workers. Though Shangrila Farms is still going through official registration, it has the support of the local government, which is grateful for the company's contributions to the rural economy.

"We want to give back to the local community and we believe they do great work in the area. Some of our projects are a free library and free English classes," Sahra said.

"The most important thing is to let people know why they should bother to learn something new. If you let the farmers know why and share your vision with them, the relationship between the investor and the community goes further," Alia said.

The Maliks started with a small team and

today the company has 10 people serving 70 locations in Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Shangri-La, Changsha and Lhasa. The company has a new direct store at EC Mall in Haidian District and a new brand called Sahra Alia New York to sell imported organic produce.

"More and more young Chinese people are genuinely interested in social business. Alia did a talk at the UCCA, which was well attended by local young adults. People asked relevant and poignant questions about having a social business in China. I think the idea of a self-sustaining enterprise for a good cause appeals to more and more people. Generally speaking I am impressed with their interest in NGOs and social work here," Sahra said.

But running a charitable business can be a challenge for expats. Like many, the Maliks faced problems in registering the company and acquiring the documents needed to operate. But because their work is special, they have generally been well-received.

"I think our customers can taste and feel the quality. Also, I think consumers prefer to make more ethical purchases. The business has really evolved into something beautiful. This year we are looking to start exporting to America and Europe. We also plan to open several more retail locations around Beijing. We have seen the city go through so many changes since 2003 and it is exciting to be part of that," Sahra said.

Embroidery that helps rural poor

By Wang Yu

Last summer, Tang' Roulou, a small children's traditional clothing shop, moved to Sanlitun from its central Gulou location.

It had been six years since the shop was opened by French owner Amelie Peraud and her partner Pierre-Yves Babin. However, the shop did not become a charity store until 2009, when it began its work with poor rural villagers.

Peraud came to China in 2001, when she stayed for two months. Her memories of old people living leisurely in Beijing's hutong left a deep impression on her, and she started studying Chinese when she returned to France. After a few months, she returned to Beijing and moved into a courtyard.

Soon after she moved, a friend in France got pregnant and she began hunting for a perfect present. Peraud discovered traditional children's clothes and tried to make a set on her own, but the needlework proved challenging. A colleague introduced her to some local tailors.

Drawing on her design and manufacturing experience, Peraud decided to open Tang' Roulou – a French word similar in sound to *tanghulu*, a traditional snack of sugarcoated haws on a stick.

Beside children's clothes, the shop also sold book covers made with dotted cloth and embroidered with the phrase "haohao xuexi": "study hard." They are a product of Peraud's collaboration with Femmes du Ningxia, a French NGO that works with women in impoverished Chinese communities.

"Two years ago, we got to know this French association by helping some women in Ningxia create and run an embroidery co-op. So we decided to support them. We went to meet the embroiderers and worked on some samples before learning more about how we could collaborate with them. We were really excited by the project, by their work and by the colors and traditional designs they showed us," Peraud said.

All embroidery is done by members of Baihua, a women's cooperative in

Ningxia Province established with the help of Femmes du Ningxia in 2007. Its members are famed for their embroidery skill, and their charms and decorative objects are centerpieces in many homes and at many celebrations.

However, their province is one of the country's poorest regions, regularly stricken by drought and isolated from bustling markets.

Half of the products' sales are returned to the co-op to pay workers' salaries, buy new materials, train new people and pay for the education of the members' children.

Some workers at Baihua are illiterate, which makes it a challenge for them to embroider complicated characters. Additionally, most women prefer to work from home making quality control a headache. To solve these problems, Peraud and Babin traveled six times to Ningxia to help train members at the co-op to organize production on their own.

"Of course we want to do more, but we progress slowly because we cannot go there as often as we wish and the distance make things more difficult," Peraud said.

The store's embroidered book covers are popular, but only 40 can be produced each cycle because of the time cost. But neither of the shop owners makes his living at the shop: both Peraud and Babin teach at a local French school.

"Thanks to the Femmes du Ningxia, more designers and brands are working with the women there. We are very happy because they get more work. Their activity is starting to become sustainable, but getting there takes time," Peraud said.

Recently, Tang' Roulou has been collaborating with the Chinese Foundation YouChange to collect funds for its social program. Their design, a "newborn baby eight accessories set," was sold for 500,000 yuan at the NGO's annual Gala-Diner auction. The foundation is running projects in rural areas to connect designers and local craftsmen in a sustainable way.

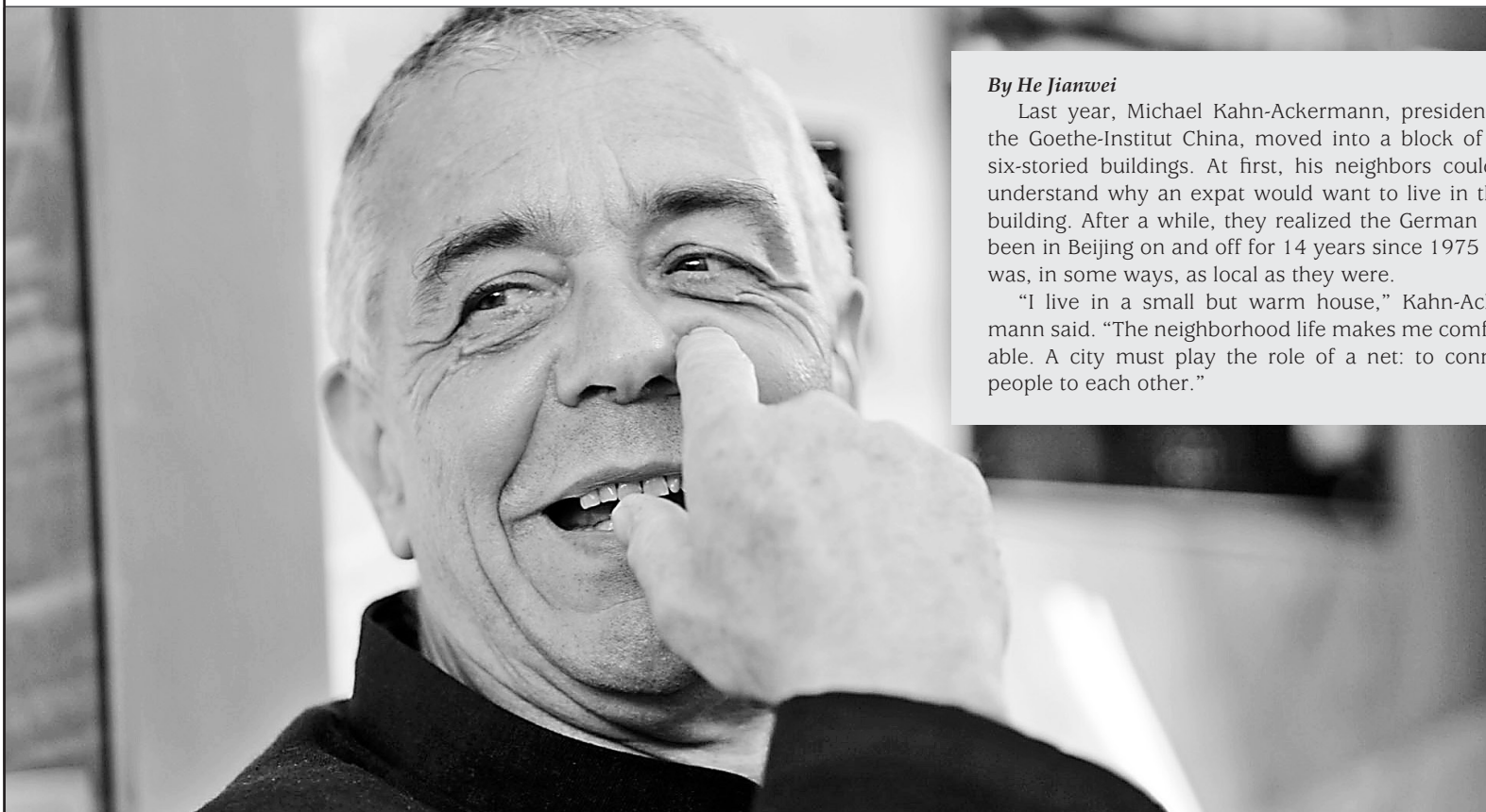
"We are still a small brand and business is growing slowly. We produce very limited editions, and these handicrafts require a lot of time. We are really satisfied with what we have achieved so far, and I hope we can have more time to travel around China and work with more craftspeople to solidify our ideas and generate new ones," Peraud said.



Pierre-Yves Babin and Amelie Peraud

Photo by Song Nannan

Interpersonal communication the soul of the city



Michael Kahn-Ackermann enjoys the neighborhood life in an old block of six-storied buildings.

Photo provided by Goethe-Institut China

By He Jianwei

Last year, Michael Kahn-Ackermann, president of the Goethe-Institut China, moved into a block of old six-storied buildings. At first, his neighbors couldn't understand why an expat would want to live in their building. After a while, they realized the German had been in Beijing on and off for 14 years since 1975 and was, in some ways, as local as they were.

"I live in a small but warm house," Kahn-Ackermann said. "The neighborhood life makes me comfortable. A city must play the role of a net: to connect people to each other."

Two important decisions

Recalling his 14 years in Beijing, Kahn-Ackermann said he made two critical decisions: one in 2006 and another last year.

After leading the Goethe-Institut in Beijing for six years, Kahn-Ackermann resigned and left Beijing in 1994. Twelve years later, when Goethe-Institut had a job vacancy, Kahn-Ackermann pounced on the opportunity, realizing Beijing was where he wanted to be.

"I was not surprised when I came back to Beijing," Kahn-Ackermann said.

"In 1994, I could anticipate the future development of this city. I wanted to verify my expectations and witness the great changes, so the decision was made for my personal interest, not only for the work itself."

The first difference he observed was the way people walked. "In the 1980s and 1990s, people – old and young, men and women – shuffled on the streets, but nowadays only the elderly walk like that. All people have quickened their steps and move with a little bit of tension," he

said, standing up and imitating the two different types of paces.

Living in Beijing is a paradox for Kahn-Ackermann. On one hand, the traffic jams and air pollution are a challenge for him; on the other hand, he has treated this city as a home.

"It is a kind of habit. When you stay in a place for a long time, you will feel that you have a nest there," he said.

Last year, as he approached retirement, Kahn-Ackermann made another decision: that China was more interest-

ing than European countries. Having found his life partner last year, he decided China was the place to settle permanently.

Every time he visits his home in Germany, he feels like he's on vacation. "I'm not used to living life at a slow pace," he said. "Ever since my youth, I've walk fast and enjoyed the fast-paced life."

"Beijing is like a laboratory. It's not a boring city. Although I know it will develop further, I don't know what the results will be."

An 'empty' city

Kahn-Ackermann will spend his retirement years here, but it doesn't mean he's satisfied with everything Beijing has to offer.

There's no doubt that Beijing is an international city, but Kahn-Ackermann thinks the current economic development model is too simple. "A city full of wide roads and skyscrapers alone cannot be called an international city," he said.

Before he left Beijing in 1994, he predicted the creation of the central business district and the disappearance of hutong and ancient buildings.

"Many people complain that Beijing is too big, but I don't think 'big' is the issue," he said. "The key problem for Beijing is 'emptiness.' The ancient lifestyle has been destroyed, but a new one has not been established."

Kahn-Ackermann believes he is a conservative when it comes to the city's development, because he prefers to see an ancient rather than modern Beijing.

"Hutong is not just a style of architecture. It is a lifestyle that has been refined over hundreds of years. It is a better system, connecting private and

public spaces," he said.

When he first came to Beijing in 1975 to study at Peking University, Kahn-Ackermann found that hutong played an important role in local people's lives. A lane integrated personal life with neighbors and the public.

"I'm not a idealist," Kahn-Ackermann said. "I know that the living conditions in many hutong are a bit rough, but it is better for us to improve the living conditions rather than to demolish them."

The new house he moved into is an old building from the 1970s. He is close

to the hutong lifestyle in this old community, which enhances communication among neighborhoods.

"Interpersonal communication is the soul of a city," he said. "If the structure functions, it's suitable for this city; if you destroy it, it does not function any more."

Kahn-Ackermann pays close attention to the number of street vendors in a neighborhood. "It shows we need social communication," he said. "If the urban planners make their projects starting from people's needs, the residents will feel more comfortable."

More like an old Beijinger

Although Kahn-Ackermann does not consider himself a Beijinger per se, he leads the life of one.

In the 1970s, Kahn-Ackermann rode a bike every day. The only difference was that he did it faster. "They rode leisurely; they looked like they had a lot of time," he said.

Today, Kahn-Ackermann goes to work by subway; he does not own a car.

Kahn-Ackermann is awed by the

changes of the last 20 years, but not necessarily impressed. "Today's young people have more pressure than former generations," he said, adding that he would not want to grow up in modern Beijing.

In the 1990s, Kahn-Ackermann said, the young in Beijing were optimistic. "They thought their lives would be better and the next generation would live an even brighter life," he said. "But today's young people are always worrying about

their lives and their future."

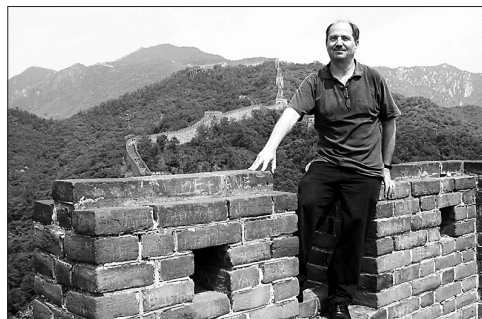
Kahn-Ackermann talks with many young people and has realized that they are very practical, sometimes too much so. If you are not useful to them, Kahn-Ackermann said, they will not be interested in dialogue.

Recently, China unveiled a statue of Confucius on Tian'anmen Square in front of the National Museum, a signal that perhaps the government was harkening

back to traditional culture. But Kahn-Ackermann does not think it can rebuild traditional values in a day.

"I began to read Chinese classical books again recently," he said. "But, today, ordinary Chinese people cannot tell me the essence of Confucius. Confucius is only read by scholars."

It is one of Kahn-Ackermann's repeated laments. China has changed, but not all change is good.



Enjoying himself at the Great Wall



In line to enter Mao's mausoleum



On a Chinese train at Fengtai Station in Beijing

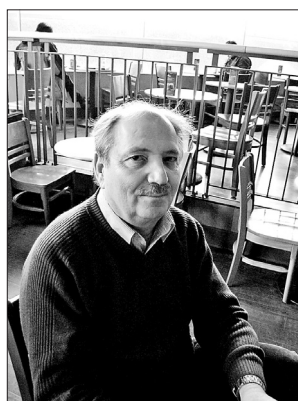
German journalist gives advice to today's youth in Beijing

By Zhao Hongyi

Johnny Erling is a longtime Chinese resident who speaks great Chinese. A correspondent for the German publications *Die Welt* and *Der Standard*, he has been working in Beijing since 1998 and knows the capital inside and out.

In our interview, Erling was concerned by the city's youth who are today pressed by heavy work loads and an accelerated pace of life. Some of them feel pessimistic about their future due to the high prices of homes, daily necessities and marriage.

"My strongest advice to the young people in Beijing is to focus on your work and not worry too much about your salary, house and girlfriend," Erling said. "Only when you contribute a lot can you get what you want."



Erling receiving interview
Photo by Zhao Hongyi

Arrival in Beijing in the 1970s

Erling studied history and philosophy at Peking University between 1975 and 1977, worked as translator for the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau of the Chinese Communist Party between 1980 and 1981, and in 1986 started working as a reporter for the *Frankfurt Rundschau* in Beijing.

He left the capital for a few years, but has lived here last 12 years with his wife. Erling said he has seen some amazing turning points in the country's history. His first stay was in the countryside, just as China was emerging from the Cultural Revolution.

"We were young students then and the authorities took care of us," Erling said. "But we were very excited to participate in grassroots activities like transplanting rice seeds with the Red Star People's Commune, manning sales counters in the department stores on Wangfujing and working in the fields around Beijing."

Erling said he believes today's young people should learn from those who have put in such hard work. "That's what life is about," he said.

He is somewhat rueful that so many young adults today

chase fashion, luxury and taste, and is nostalgic for the 1970s, when everyone was working with their noses to the grindstone.

"I still remember how motivated and energized people were at that time," Erling said. "The whole country was in the process of exploring the new market economy."

Focus on learning and contributing

Erling can only sigh when talking about mass inability to afford housing.

"They are expecting too much," he said. "We should recognize that life is not easy. It's a long journey of hardship and effort."

He said it's not young people's fault, but that the country's tremendous growth has created a desire for luxury items and material wealth.

"We should tell young people that all these things, like houses, the high life and marriage, require effort," he said. "Not years, but decades of it."

Erling said people should diversify their desires, perhaps focusing on charity, the environment and education. He said it takes time to build a healthy social culture and environment that allows young people to learn these values.

China is an unfinished story, changing all the time, he said, but the process on the whole "has been positive."

Thirty years ago, "who could have imagined China would become the second largest economy?" he said.

Beijing has come a long way but has further to go

When asked what advice he would give Beijingers, Erling first praised the city's tremendous growth. "Beijingers have raised their thinking, their behavior and general quality," he said, "espe-



Johnny reports about the construction of the Bird's Nest.

Photos provided by Johnny Erling

cially in the past decade and after the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008 in particular."

But he also listed a number of the points where China still needs to improve: Internet freedom, lack of transparency, bureaucracy and corruption.

"These problems can have a major impact on your country," he said.

Erling, as a journalist, is in a favorable position to witness the city's changes with an objective eye. He is especially even-minded because he is an outsider.

That's not to say Erling doesn't get emotional here. When he hears stories of *chengguan* (city supervisors) bullying vulnerable vendors, or about traffic jams and rocketing property prices, he gets angry, but he recognizes that these problems cannot be eliminated overnight.

Erling's biggest complaint about Beijing is the development of its infrastructure. "Beijing has built many centers, towers and communities within Fourth Ring Road," he said. "Unfortunately, most of these buildings are in a very concentrated area."

He said this was the cause of the terrible traffic jams and pollution in the capital.

"You should diversify the city's layout and develop suburbs, creating satellite towns and communities," he said.

Erling said China has relaxed many of its restrictions but still has more, than other powerful countries.

Talking about residence permits in Beijing, he said the city is tolerant to expats but needs to provide a freer environment if it expects to attract more foreigners to settle permanently.

Erling said he has no plans to leave the country anytime soon. He would consider moving if he got fed up with his job, but so far, there are no indications of that happening.

How expats survive in Beijing

We live in a city on its way to becoming an international metropolis and have watched our standard of living rise ever higher: it is hard to find Mao-suited locals cycling to work each morning.

But for expats working and living in the capital, life can be an exotic adventure. How does one find a dentist, pay an electric bill or get along with a Chinese neighbor? *Beijing Today* talked to expats who have settled down in the city and asked them to share their experiences using the following questionnaire.

1. Is it easy to live in Beijing? Why or why not?
2. Which moment of the day do you like most?
3. What's most "gelivable" (cool) and "ungelivable" (ridiculous) about Beijing? What are the best and worst things about Beijingers?
4. What keeps you here? What makes you loathe the city?
5. What affects you most during your day: rising prices, traffic or government policies?
6. Do you blog? Whose blogs do you read?
7. Is it hard for you to have a relationship with a local?
8. What is keeping you from being a new Beijinger? Any suggestions?
9. If you were to leave the city one day, why would that be?
10. Make a wish for our readers!



Peter Junge, 48, German president of the Beijing Linux User Group

1. The most complicated thing about Beijing is that it's very large and the traffic has many obstacles. One always needs to leave plenty of time for anything that needs to be done outside your neighborhood. Apart from that, it's quite OK to live here.
2. Lunch. I love Chinese food.
3. Most Beijingers are very helpful and kind. But whenever something does not proceed as expected, we are always told "Please wait a moment," even if that moment may take hours.
4. I like Beijing very much. I cannot really explain why. The pollution is one thing that could make me leave if it gets worse.
6. I'm not blogging. However, I do read many blogs related to my profession (IT).
8. The most inviting thing about Beijing is the old people in the parks. I sometimes feel left out, because my Chinese is still not too good.
9. Worsening pollution or a great job opportunity.
10. I wish everyone a happy Year of the Rabbit, especially those who are born under this sign, like me!

(By Liang Meilan)



Johnny Erling, around 60 German journalist

1. The city is convenient, but I would not call it a major power.
2. I like mornings. I start working early.
3. The most "gelivable" thing is the environment, especially in how it treats the media – in general.
4. The living environment is nice and clean.
5. Traffic jams disrupt my visits and trips.
6. I don't have a microblog nor do I surf the Internet with normal Web surfing.
7. Chinese people are open and tolerant.
8. Government policies that limit my freedom of expression to meet the standards I would expect of a democracy.
9. I will only leave China when I am forced to.
10. Young people should be optimistic and contributing.

Jade Gray, 36, co-founder of Gong Ho! Pizza

1. Beijing is rewarding in big ways and challenging in small ways. I love the vibe, culture, people and surrounding hills. Can't say I'm a fan of the pollution and traffic.
2. I like sitting down for a glass of New Zealand wine at our Great Wall Courtyard retreat, the Gung Ho Hut at Jiankou Great Wall.
3. Beijingers? The best part is that they say what they think. The worst part is that they are selfish drivers.
4. I love Beijing because of the fascinating people, both local and foreign. I loathe the traffic.
5. Rising prices put pressure on my business, traffic puts pressure on my soul and new visa laws puts pressure on my friends.
9. I would leave for my family or because of the pollution.
10. That Beijingers realize that all the money in the world cannot buy history. I hope people make a bigger effort to ensure that old Beijing's hutongs are saved. New Beijing will thank you some day.



John O'Loughlen, 37, co-founder of Gong Ho! Pizza

1. I know how the city operates and how to reduce troubles in an urban jungle like Beijing.
2. When I practice yoga, I feel relaxed and at peace.
3. The most gelivable thing is the international vibe of the city – we see people returning here from all over the world after getting experience and an education abroad. The most ungelivable thing is that people still wear pajamas in the hutong in the afternoon.
4. It feels like home.
5. I think these are the short-term costs of a long-term game.
6. Yes, Gong Ho! Pizza has a blog! I follow some friends' like Hong Ying, a Chinese writer who lives part-time in London, Dominic from Plastered-T shirts, finance expert Cai Jingqing and the Hong Kong designer Joanne Ooi.
7. I haven't had that many opportunities, but my friends don't make it sound hard.
9. The city is changing so fast and I want to be part of that.
10. Come and try Gong Ho! Pizza. It will change your life!

(By Annie Wei)



Photo provided by Goethe-Institut China

Michael Kahn-Ackermann, 65, president of the Goethe-Institut China

1. It is hard to live here. The city has trashed the basis of its traditional life, the hutong, which carried it through hundreds of years. It was a good system for connecting private neighborhoods and public spaces.
4. My partner for life lives here and Beijing is more interesting than European cities. I will stay here after I retire.
5. I live in a small apartment in a 1970s block. I go to work by subway.

(By He Jianwei)

Vimbayi Kajese, in late 20s, morning presenter on CCTV News

1. When you get used to the cultural differences, the language, the way people think, the air and weather, living here is smooth sailing. When people ask me about living here, I compare it to tumbling down a rabbit hole: you never know where you will end up. It's so easy to end up lonely and depressed here. Over the past year I've made an attempt to explore more of Beijing's subcultures.
2. I prefer the moment when I look out my window and see those first morning rays piercing the blue sky. I feel like I can achieve anything when there is a blue sky.
5. Inflation motivates me to find supplementary income. As for the traffic, I have my iPod so I can use that time to meditate or listen to intellectually stimulating podcasts. I generally avoid being on the road during rush hour if it can be helped.
8. I think people here should embrace the cosmopolitan changes, but not forget about the traditions which this city has inherited. People who appreciate the city's history need to pass on that legacy to newcomers. You're an old Beijinger when you find yourself having to defend the city, either in your conversations or by picking up trash.
10. I hope this year you will find the purpose for your life, and that your path will be one of prosperity, good health and compassion.

(By Li Zhixin)



Andy Parker, 22, British model

1. Living here is easy. The language barrier is frustrating, but that's my fault, not the Chinese people's.
2. I like the moment my booker tells me got me a job. Also the moment I pour vinegar over my dumplings on days when I eat them.
3. Two words: Suzie and Wong's.
4. I stay here because I feel free. I would hate to leave behind every street, every bar and every park that has become the site of a memory.
5. The traffic makes the average work day drag out twice as long, and government policies make working difficult. But the only part of life here that really gets me down is the spitting.
7. Yes! So hard! I wish it wasn't because I really like how Chinese people look. Sadly, the locals rarely approach me, and when they do they are too timid.
10. I hope the weather gets warmer soon, then maybe going outside won't be so horrible!

(By Wang Yu)



Sahra Malik, in late 20s, founder of Shangrila Farm

1. Beijing is a great place with lots of culture and energy. You never get bored here!
2. My first cup of coffee.
3. Chinglish signs. Correcting them is very entertaining.
4. My business and friendships (keep me here). Pollution – especially not seeing blue skies enough – makes me hate it.
5. The government policies change day to day and keep basic business a challenge.
7. I have a great boyfriend who I met in Beijing, so I would say it's possible.
9. To find sunny skies.
10. I wish everyone a happy Chinese New Year!

(By Wang Yu)

d appreciate more freedom when covering news and using the Internet – the kind of environment expected of ly while my colleagues in Germany are still in their dreams. change and progresse we see every day. The most “ungelivable” thing is how the bureaucracy has not changed – decades. convenient. I prefer to observe the city and China as a professional rather than be part of it. interviews. We need to solve that problem. I have not had any problems with the rocketing prices and new policies. ead any. There are too many new technologies and I don't think we should bother master them all. I can do my job ant, and easy to befriend. My wife and I have many Chinese friends. My son grew up here. Before he went to the UK nships with local girls. I don't know whether he is still going out with any of them. ability to have a job and own a business or property keep me from becoming a Beijinger. China should open up more a major power. ed up with my job or a better opportunity presents itself. e and work more instead of thinking of owning a house, a wife and luxury goods. Don't expect so much! Keep working

(By Zhao Hongyi)



Max Levy, 32, partner at Apothecary

1. Beijing can be a difficult city to live in because it is so spread out and getting around can be impossible, but the quality of the people makes it a little easier to live here
2. Even though I am not usually a morning person, I love early spring mornings in Beijing. The skies are clear, the sun is shining brightly and the city is just starting to fill up.
3. Something ungelivable? The fact that there are more subways here than any other city in the world, yet you still can't use them to get anywhere.
4. The people are definitely one of the main reasons. Beijing is also a very challenging city to live and work in, and I like a challenge. No matter how many things you have seen, Beijing will always surprise you and catch you off guard.
5. All three. Please fix the public transportation.
6. Twitter. It's a fake news network that gives me a lot of laughs during the day.
7. No, but most of my friends are from other parts of the country. Beijing can be a difficult place for people to live if they don't have residency here, and foreigners tend to share that experience.
8. Like many foreigners, I wish that the government would do something to allow us to get permanent residence here. It's very depressing that after five years of owning businesses and paying my taxes here, I still have to register my permanent apartment as a “temporary residence.”
9. Probably retirement. I love working and living in Beijing, but if I stopped working I would want to live somewhere with less severe weather.
10. Let's hope for less inflation in the new year!

(By Zhang Dongya)

Taking Western gourmet experiences local

By Annie Wei

Food is important because it binds us: it is something we all share. *Beijing Today* spoke with the founders of Gung Ho! Pizza and Liu Yang, a local cheese maker, about the challenges and thrills of bringing Western food to local diners. Each has only one location, but both are confident about the potential of this market and in what they do.

Gung Ho! Pizza, starting small with a big blueprint

By Annie Wei

Gung Ho! Pizza had its share of publicity in expat publications when it opened last year, but many locals also called the restaurant for delivery when they saw reviews on a local food website.

More than a few reviews went something like this: "Wha! A foreign dude showed up at our door to deliver our pizza!"

It was the delivery company's co-founder, Jade Gray, 36, from New Zealand. He joined Gung Ho! Pizza's delivery team and made sure to deliver to Chinese families so that he could get feedback from locals. How do they like his flavor? Are they happy with the delivery speed? What can they do better?

Having lived in China for 12 years, Gray is passionate about the country. Unlike many expats who live within their foreign communities, "Jade has really made [Beijing] his home," said John O'Loughlen, Gray's business partner.

O'Loughlen said Gray is very attentive to the human resources part of business. "Jade has visited his long-term employees' homes in small countryside all over northeast China and gotten to know their parents. He celebrated Chinese New Year with his employees who couldn't make it home during the Chinese New Year."

O'Loughlen, 37, also from New Zealand, became good friends with Gray six years ago when they were language students at Beijing Culture and Language University. He was



New Zealand Prime Minister John Key (second from right) stands between Gung Ho! Pizza co-founders John O'Loughlen (center) and Jade Gray. Photo provided by Gung Ho! Pizza

sent to learn Chinese by Goldman Sachs' New York office. Back then, Gray's bar Lush was the most popular hang-out spot for foreign students in Wudaokou.

Since then, they have both explored various pizzas businesses: O'Loughlen left Goldman Sachs and was recruited to see the overseas growth of Dominos; with the success of Lush, Gray opened a New York-style pizza house, Pyro, targeting foreign students in Haidian with big, thick pizzas at affordable prices.

"I sensed Jade and I would

open a business together some day," O'Loughlen said. Both had experience running pizza restaurants and both saw the future of the food industry in China: delivery and a personalized experience.

"Unlike big fast-food companies that have all their calls transferred to Guangzhou, we want to make it fun and exciting. We want to know our customers and give them a personal experience," O'Loughlen said.

People also want to eat healthy, which is why Gung Ho! Pizza uses organic flour and makes whole-wheat pizzas.

Their ingredients are fresh and they offer customers a gourmet experience.

O'Loughlen said their dream is to build a company culture. The pizza house has seven Chinese employees who are also shareholders. "When they invest themselves in the business, they should benefit from the dream as well."

O'Loughlen said they have many ideas: to return a certain amount of profit to social businesses, to be eco-friendly and to recycle all delivery pizza boxes.

With increasing rent and labor costs, O'Loughlen said it

is harder to maintain a restaurant today compared to 10 years ago. The most challenging part is finding good people and keeping them.

A lot of people they met who are under 30 have no patience and don't like to work hard. "They think they can be the boss without earning the experience," O'Loughlen said. As for advice for other entrepreneurs, O'Loughlen said, "No matter how good you were before, in China, do your homework properly, be respectful to the local culture and don't assume it is like anywhere else."

Exploring new areas is fun

By Annie Wei

Last year, Mercedes-Benz invited six people to participate in an advertising campaign, "Chasing Your Dream," for its E-series.

Liu Yang, the only local artisanal cheese maker in town, was one of speakers. He was joined by Ji Shisan, founder of Science Squirrels, an organization aiming to make science more accessible, and a musician, a consultant-turned-baker and a film director.

Liu took a look at the people around him and smiled wryly. "I guess I'm doing something not very mainstream," he said.

Liu, 37, studied cheese-making in France for seven years. He returned to China in 2007 and opened a cheese workshop, Le Fromager de Pekin (The Cheese Maker of Beijing), in Huilongguan, Changping District.

"When I went back to China,

I felt that I did not want to work for others," he said.

Many Western restaurants and buffets at top hotels in Europe and America use artisanal cheese – produced in limited quantities using traditional methods – which has a richer, more intense flavor than regularly produced cheese. Beijing's supply of cheese is largely imported.

Liu said he fell in love with cheese from the first piece he tried in 2000. He aims to produce cheese that has "a taste of France away from France," as well as to expose Chinese people to the taste of authentic, French artisanal cheese.

To accomplish this, Le Fromager imports equipment from France and follows the manufacturing procedure for traditional, handmade French cheese.

The shop makes camembert, ricotta and tome, which



Liu Yang making cheese at his workshop at Huilongguan

Photo provided by Liu Yang

cost 60 to 200 yuan per kilogram. Liu's cheeses are made using organic milk – a rich formula free of additives and animal growth hormones. The cheeses are aged from two weeks to two months.

Le Fromager has been around for more than two years

and its monthly production has increased from 100 kilograms to 200 kilograms. His customer base is increasing.

"Most customers are foreigners living in Beijing, but the number of Chinese customers is increasing," Liu said.

Running a small dairy busi-

ness in China is not easy. There are many risks.

"If some batch of cheese has quality issues, that will ruin Le Fromager's reputation," Liu said.

Risks also come from suppliers, as raw material prices have increased dramatically in the last half of 2010. Furthermore, government business policies tend to support big enterprises, not small ones. It is difficult to obtain certificates necessary to sell to big supermarkets.

But while cheese isn't part of the traditional Chinese diet, its newness makes it a novelty that attracts adventurous eaters. "It's an area waiting for you to explore," Liu said.

To promote Le Fromager, Liu organizes workshops and cheese-tasting events.

"I think I should start an online cheese store in 2011," Liu said.

Passion for fashion

By Annie Wei

"There are always tough times in life," said Xiao Hui, lying in a cozy sofa, dressed up in a casual Dolce&Gabbana outfit, DIESEL jeans and Y-3 sneakers with a 2-carat Cartier diamond ring and a Louis Vuitton bracelet shining on his hands.

Xiao is an anomaly. Originally from second-tier city Wuhan in Hubei Province, he distinguished himself in the capital through his voracious appetite for brand-name luxury products.

But affording them wasn't easy.

A decade ago, Xiao was still a broadcasting student with a modest allowance at Beijing Normal School. He would walk for hours to avoid paying the 1-yuan bus fare, and yet would plunk 10,000 yuan in a heartbeat for a discount jacket at the Peninsula Hotel.

"Back then, I was ready to die for those beautiful things," said the 30-year-old Xiao.

After graduation, his relatives helped him to land a stable job at a state-owned company in western Beijing. He rented a small apartment and earned 2,000-3,000 yuan per month.

Living paycheck to paycheck on the west side was harsh. The only thing he could find that had something to do with fashion was a modeling gig for catalog distributed by Hualian, a big shopping mall at West Fourth Ring Road.

"Many old residents in the neighborhood recognized me when I passed by," he said.

After three-years of struggling with his family to get out of his job, Xiao was recruited as display artist for Mango.

"That was when I started having real clients who asked me to be their fashion consultant and buyer," Xiao said. He began training stores in how to dress up their mannequins to impress shoppers.

"One of my clients spent 50,000 to 60,000 yuan in one purchase at Mango," he said.

Top tap the increasing number of moneyed customers, a distributor of Kangji-yong, an international brand from South Korea, recruited Xiao. He was soon sought out by Liu Jo, an Italian second-line brand, and then La Perla, a luxury lingerie brand.

Today, Xiao has disassociated himself from brands to have more freedom as a buyer.

"Some international brands have good quality and designs, but that does not make them worthy of our attention," he said. Xiao criticized one lingerie brand he worked at for adhering too closely to its designer's ideas and ignoring the body difference between Asian and European women.

If one were to add up the brand-name clothing and accessories that pass through Xiao's hands, he would be making the equivalent of 2 million yuan per month.



Designer Xiao Hui (middle) and models pose for his new design.

Photo provided by Xiao Hui

"The real purpose of luxury brands should be to deliver quality products and services," he said. "So far, nothing on the Chinese mainland can deliver the kind of service one expects of luxury."

Many brand-name articles in Chinese stores are obviously out-of-date or poorly made. And don't even try asking the store clerk to fix your brand-name necklace or clean your leather bag.

"I personally think these brands are taking advantage of the rich people in China, and they are being spoiled by rich buyers who prefer to buy a new 14,000-yuan bag when its handles get dirty rather than have it cleaned," he said.

The brands also fail to make customers feel they have something exclusive, Xiao said. "I have a super-VIP membership card at an high-end department store because my customers spend so much there," Xiao said. "That was when I saw there were other cardholders who had only 200,000 yuan in total assets. Isn't a VIP club expected to feel exclusive?"

However, Xiao said he is confident about the growing niche market for local designers and the new appetite for Chinese-designed fashion.

He is hoping to expand his career and cross over into other media. "Some days I want to be a designer, and other days I prefer hosting a talk show on BTV," he said.

On February 28, Xiao will join 29 singers for an exhibition — a salute to Lady Gaga.

What Xiao Hui's customers like

Xiao Hui said his customers like the international designers Phillip Lim, Alexandra Wang, Alexandra McQueen, Rick Owen and Maison Martin Margiela.

"Chinese customers appreciate their strong sense of design, cuts that show off the body's shape and their low-key yet luxurious and practical threads," he said. For local designers, Xiao recommends Vega Wang, Guo Pei and Laurence Xu.

Laurence Xu

This designer became an overnight sensation when Fan Bingbing shows up in Xu's gold dragon-print evening dress at Cannes Film Festival in May 2010.

Xu's designs are favored by many film stars like Zhang Ziyi, Zhang Jinchu and Zhou Yun. His designs contain exaggerated Chinese elements like dragons, peonies and wash paintings.

Laurence Xu workshop
Tel: 6562 9608 for RSVP
Email:
laurence2008@yahoo.cn

Vega Wang

Wang, 26, graduated from the Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London and established her own brand at Jianwai Soho earlier last year. Three stores sell her designs and several magazines have showcased her work.

Shunning the fashions of the season, she prefers for her looks to be timeless. Her creations reflect life and things happening at the moment.

"An independent brand should have something it wants to express," Wang said. She does not read fashion magazines or care what is popular in Europe or North America. "After all, our body shapes are different," she said.

Wang, who said she prefers living in Xiamen, Fujian Province because it's considered "the utopia for young Chinese literates," said she also likes Beijing for its mixed culture scene.

"Art, music and fashion are always growing together here," she said

Her boutique at Jianwai Soho carries her original designs, like ready-to-wear shoes, bags and accessories, and also provides custom-made and made-to-wear services.

Where: Jianwai Soho Building 6, Level B1, Boutique 662 (across from Tony's Studio, near SHINE boutique)

Open: 1-6 pm
Tel: 5900 2279

Website: Vegazaishiwang.com

Guo Pei

Guo's combination of haute-couture and traditional design stunned many visitors at China Fashion Week in November 2010.

Born in 1967, Guo worked for a range of fashion companies before becoming chief designer of the newly established Tianma (Horse Of Heaven) in 1989. Under her talented leadership, the company quickly became one of the country's most popular women labels. During her six years at Tianma, 400,000 pieces of her 250 designs were produced.

In 1995, she moved to the Milano Fashion Company Limited, a Taiwanese-American joint venture. While there, she continued working on her own independent collections and resigned to establish her own company — Meigui-fang (Rosy Studio) in 1996.

In 1997, Guo Pei was named one of the country's Top 10 fashion designers. She now works in her studio D Zone at Dashanzi in Beijing.

Where: 2C-2D, 5 Laiguangying, Chaoyang District

Tel: 8490 7322

Website: rosystudio.com.cn



Laurence Xu's design

CFP Photo

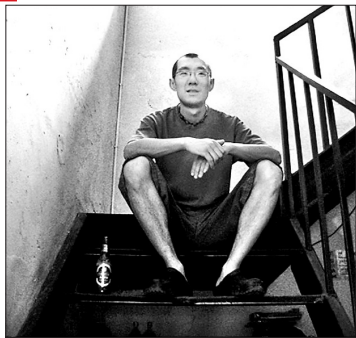


Vega Wang's design

Photo provided by Vega Wang



Guo Pei's design CFP Photo



Liu Ke, the designer and owner of the hostel

By Chu Meng

Since the dawn of the millennium, the government has been committed to blind demolition in the name of urbanization, leveling hundreds of factories in the urban area. With these goes a part of our industrial heritage. Liu Ke, a designer wants to ensure some of these old factories survive the bulldozer of modernization by giving them a new function as public construction icons.

Born in Harbin but branding himself a "Beijing native," Liu Ke, 36, has lived in the capital for the last decade. His past projects include the P Loft Youth Hostel in the dorms of an abandoned high-profile prison one block from Yonghegong Lama Temple, opened in 2005.

In December 2010, Liu returned from the 48th International Youth Hostel Association (IYHA) Biennial Convention in Shenzhen. It was the association's first convention in China, held to recognize the country's efforts to help the youth of the world.

Hostels in China, though few, have multiplied during the last decade. First opened in Guangzhou, many independent Chinese designers have picked up the concept to promote travel and cultural exchange.

Of the 164 international youth hostels in China, only 14 are in Beijing.

Liu said his career plan in Beijing was inspired by a deep regret in the city's culture of demolition.

Beijing was once the second most important heavy industry base after Harbin, an industrial city in the northeast. But social and economic transformation has made heavy industry an unwanted memory.

Since the dawn of the millennium, the government has been committed to blind demolition in the name of urbanization, leveling hundreds of factories in the urban area. The Beijing Spinning Mill on Chaoyang Bei Lu and the Beijing Mudan Television Factory at Gongzhufen are long gone.

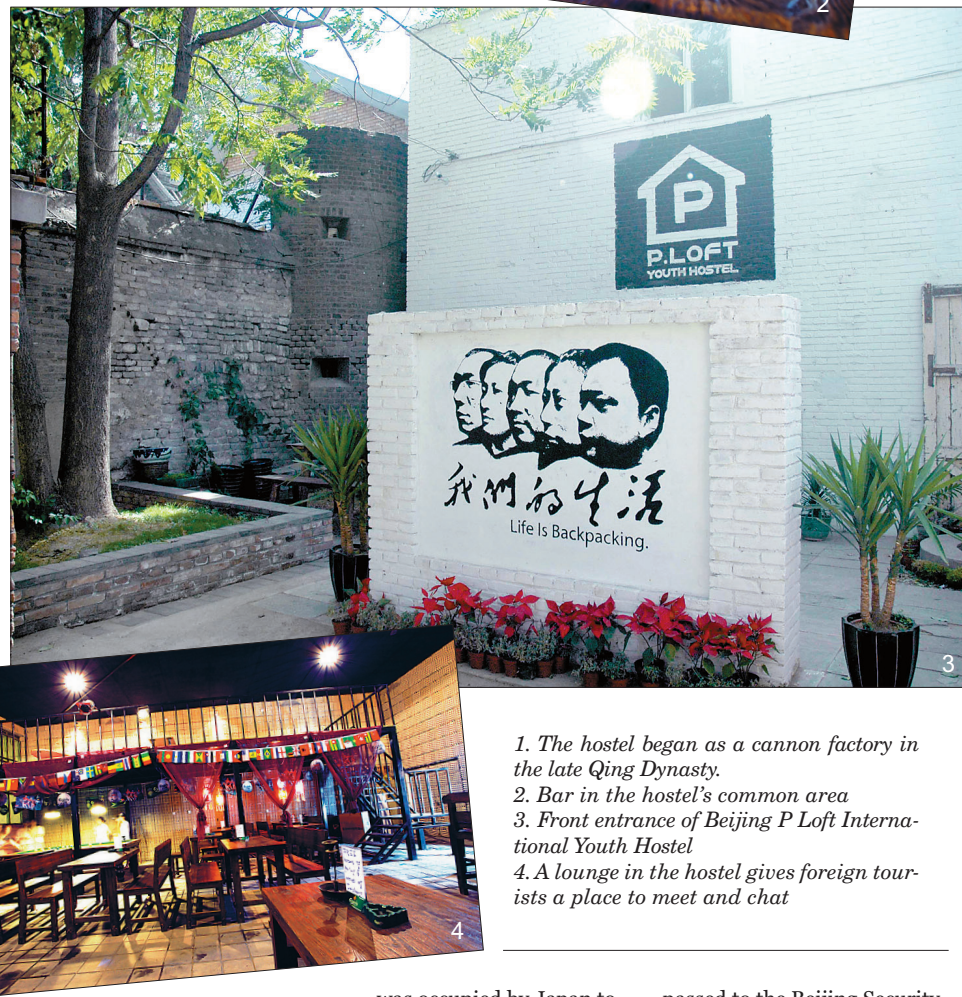
"With these goes a part of our industrial heritage. I want to ensure some of these old factories survive the bulldozer of modernization by giving them a new function as public construction icons," Liu said.

In the beginning, Liu just wanted to make a budget destination for travelers. "Soon I found I wanted my hostel to be more than just an inn. I realized it could be a window to share Beijing's culture with visitors," he said.

For most travelers, their

hotel is a first brush with local culture. But hostels are even more important as a place where young travelers can make a cultural connection.

Liu's Beijing P Loft Youth Hostel in Paoju Hutong, next to Yonghegong Lama Temple, is the only loft hostel in the city. "Few Beijing natives knew that before it was a hostel, it was a high-profile prison abandoned by the government," he said. Even today, just around the



1. The hostel began as a cannon factory in the late Qing Dynasty.
2. Bar in the hostel's common area
3. Front entrance of Beijing P Loft International Youth Hostel
4. A lounge in the hostel gives foreign tourists a place to meet and chat

corner is one of the city's largest police stations.

Paoju Factory, translated as cannon factory, is named from its previous function as a munitions factory in the late Qing Dynasty. Later, imported technology supplanted domestic arms production and the factory closed.

It was turned into a prison by the government of the Republic of China (1912-1949). During the War Against Japanese Aggression (1937-1945) it

was occupied by Japan to imprison patriots such as General Ji Hongchang.

"At the peak, the prison incarcerated 3,000 patriots and other Chinese prisoners of war," Liu said.

In an ironic twist, after the war the prison was used to detain Japanese war criminals like the traitorous Kawashima Yoshiko, sister-in-law to the last Qing emperor Pu Yi.

After 1949, it became the bureau prison of Dongcheng district and was used to hold political prisoners. It was then

passed to the Beijing Security Department of the Bureau of Public Transportation until its penal section was moved to Daxing district in 2005.

Such prison constructions constituted half of Paoju Hutong. Its high, castle-like walls are still equipped with electrified security wires that Liu believes have been in use since World War II.

He decided not to tear down those castle-like walls and abandoned iron wires, even though they were already shabby, for they are a part

of the city, at least a part of the city's history, bearing city identities.

"If I did not find and renovated the site, I think the city and country would have lost something important," he said.

"People who spend 12 hours to fly here from the other side of the globe aren't coming to see KFC and Starbucks – they are coming to see things they cannot find anywhere else. Those are what make up Beijing's identity," he said.

Because it was built in a hutong designated as a historical relic, the main structures had to be left as is.

Liu rebuilt the old boiler room as a public leisure room with a bar with pool tables, turned a two-story hall into loft guest rooms and set up the last room with indoor basketball and tennis courts.

In addition to its great location, the hostel offers a Western breakfast, lunch take-out and can arrange dinner reservations. It also assists guests with bicycle rentals and provides books on the city's history.

The tourism market has exploded since 2007: especially after the 2008 Beijing Olympics. The Shanghai Expo and Guangzhou Asian Games this year brought another flood of travelers to the country.

"Young foreign travelers pick youth hostels as their first choice, not economy hotels. Money is one reason, and cultural curiosity is another. The city's hostel operators know this, and that's why they seek out those with decorations that emphasize local style," said Rawdon Lau, lead consultant at YHA China, and former secretary general of the IYHA UK from 1988 to 2002.

It makes the traveler's stay that much more memorable and make the city unique. Beijing's cultural identity and historic heritage make it incredibly attractive to young travelers from around the world. That is why Beijing's tourism market is booming.



Photos provided by Liu Ke



Tech geeks go social

By Liang Meilan

In line with rapid technological advancements, geeks, who 10 years ago were social outcasts, have seen their reputations make an about-face. They're now cool.

As Emma Jacobs wrote in a 2005 *Financial Times* op-ed titled "Geeks shall inherit the earth," 2010 saw geek culture go mainstream. After all, what are Steve Jobs, Mark Zuckerberg and Julian Assange but high-standing geeks?

The same goes in China. Tech geeks are no longer stereotyped as eccentrics married to computer programs and gadgets. They are now prominent Fortune 500 business owners, successful entrepreneurs and creative developers.

This group is also increasingly going out, meeting like-minded people and sharing ideas. Community oriented and idea-driven "geek gatherings" in big cities are on the rise, to the benefit of everyone.



Founders of Open Party are in their 20s and early 30s.

Photos by Zhang Minghe

Beijing Open Party: IT party

On January 21, in the Thoughtworks Beijing office near Dongzhimen, some 80 IT practitioners and enthusiasts from all parts of town teamed up for an "unconference" — an informal business gathering all about sharing ideas.

The event was organized by an IT network called Beijing Open Party, the only network that connects various online technophile groups such as Beijing Java User Group. It holds monthly events.

Unconferences, which Open Party introduced to Beijing in 2008, are rare in China. The topics are not predetermined but rather generated by member submissions and voting.

Topics are not limited to IT.



Open Party unconference happens once a month.

In the first session, attendees listened attentively to a lecture about Robert's Rules of Order, a guide for holding efficient meetings and conferences.

Saturday's meeting also covered

topics related to co-working, startup financing, Buddhism, Java mobile platform development and product quality.

"The core of such events is providing opportunities for geeks

who are used to staying at home to go out and meet each other," said Li Dan, one of Open Party's founders.

Before Open Party, lots of IT nerds in Beijing chatted with one another and posted on forums but rarely met in person. Forums tended to run into topic shortages after two or three years.

"Knowing well that geeks don't necessarily like being confined at home, we decided to borrow the concept of unconference, a topic-driven community event format we frequently saw in the Bay Area and Silicon Valley," said co-founder Tian Yue.

In Western countries, unconferences can be so informal that they're held in bars. Open Party hasn't gone that far — yet.

"In China, it is very hard to find a venue for geek gatherings," said co-founded Qian Anchuan. "Open Party set the example, and I hope the format can be used by other IT communities."

Open Party's unconferences are not completely authentic for another reason: "We Chinese people are still not good at actively expressing our ideas," Li said. "It's especially true with IT geeks."

As a result, topics are submitted online before the event, then pre-chosen by organizers. People can contribute relevant subtopics for discussion.

"We hope the format can be used by communities in other fields," Li said. "Then society can become more connected and open-minded."

Changing the geek lifestyle

Though highly employable and bursting with disposable income, IT geeks in China live comparatively dull lives.

Developers at Huawei, a top engineer of telecommunications hardware and networks, have to work 9-to-5 in the confinement of secret labs, offline and disconnected from the outside world, leaving personal items like cell phones and books outside.

That's the life of many Chinese geeks. They lack human contact at the workplace and are uncomfortable meeting people after work.

In this environment, the Internet is their social oasis.

Social networking sites like Tencent's QQ and Sina's Weibo are growing ever-popular. The Web traffic site Alexa lists QQ as the second-most visited website in China, after Baidu.

"Most of my online friends are people like me who are crazy about fixing computers," Qian said. "Because the



Topics discussed are not limited to IT.

cyber world is so large, they have to select a realm to play in. Geeks only meet other geeks because it is not easy for other people to understand us."

And here we come to a second reason Open Party is popular: it provides the right atmosphere for geeks to connect in person.

"Many of our attendees first came at the behest of their friends," Tian said. "As they spent an afternoon discussing multiple

topics reflecting various lifestyles, many felt the inner craving to get out more and participate even in non-tech topics."

Open Party once invited an NGO to talk about its nonprofit charity tour. They tried every means to help the impoverished people they meet during the trip.

"In hearing it, I realized life isn't just about how much money you make," said Li Xiang, a con-

sultant from Thoughtworks.

Open Party helps geeks change their life attitude by letting them understand the meaning of sharing — the fact that ordinary people can do it. In China, it's usually only top officials and experts who get a chance to give speeches.

"That's because we are too modest and not confident enough," Li said. "Through the unconference format, people have equal opportunity to voice ideas and practice presentation skills. Most importantly, people will get to know their ideas and experiences can inspire change from their listeners."

Open Party is beneficial in another broader sense.

"Many Chinese people make friends based on practical reasons. They even know how to calculate the ROI (return on investment) in making a new friend. But they forget that friendship is about sincerity and selflessness," Tian said.

Peter Junge from Hamburg, Germany, president of Beijing Linux User Group, an expat-founded geek community, talked about the difference between expat and local geeks.

"Unlike Western countries where computer technology has been advanced to a high level and many IT practitioners' ages range from 20 to 70 or older, China began offering computer science to large numbers of students not more than 10 years ago, so the largest and most active IT people in China are below 30," Junge said. "Life is tough for many locals."

The founders of Open Party, all in their 20s, said they agree with the sentiment.

But spending an afternoon in their presence, listening to them speak and give heart-to-heart talks, one can't help but think this is true "social networking." And as geeks become more sociable, one can only imagine the positive influence they'll have on the greater world.

Embassies use microblogs for grassroots diplomacy

By Han Manman

The year 2010 will be remembered as the beginning of China's Microblog Era. Leading Internet portals Sina, Sohu, NetEase and Tencent launched microblog services, and more than 20 percent of events were spread through microblogs or attracted nationwide or global attention through them.

Microblogs have not only affected common Chinese people but also foreign organizations in China. In recent months, several embassies have launched microblogs to gather public opinion and to extend national diplomacy to the grassroots level.

Experts said those embassies have set a good example for local governments on how to use this new tool to work effectively with the public and open more channels of communication.

Diplomats winning Chinese fans

"Summoned for a diplomatic dressing down, Jon Huntsman Jr., the American ambassador to Beijing, hopped on his sturdy 'Forever' brand Chinese bicycle and pedaled off to the Foreign Ministry. Flustered guards there, expecting the US representative to sweep up in an armored Cadillac, made him park by a side gate and walk in ..."

This was a recent message that Richard Buangan, spokesman for the US embassy in Beijing, wrote on his microblog days ago.

Buangan became the first spokesman for a foreign embassy to open a microblog account on people.com.cn, the website of the *People's Daily*, on August 13 last year.

Buangan writes in Chinese about various issues, from embassy news to China-US relations to funny anecdotes, such as: "Too cute, two '90s-generation kids kiss for 12 hours in public."

In just half a year, he has attracted 8,000 online fans.

Buangan's microblog is just one of the US embassy's attempts to promote itself in China and to close the distance with Chinese people using new media.

"The US embassy can be called the first embassy using the microblog to promote themselves and its country," said Hu Yong, a popular microblogger and professor of the School of Journalism and Communication at Peking University.

Hu said he has observed the embassy's Web diplomacy since late 2009.

Hu received an unexpected invitation from the US embassy in November 2009 to attend a special meeting with several popular China bloggers. The topic was even more unexpected: preparing for President Barack Obama's China visit.

"This was a really novel experience, not only for me but also the US embassy in China," Hu said, adding that bloggers were allowed to take their laptops to webcast the meeting.

Officials from various departments attended the meeting and answered the bloggers' questions.

"The embassy's attempt at something new proved successful, as many Chinese netizens

participated in the webcast and asked questions," Hu said, adding that the close contact with Chinese netizens also helped the embassy gain an understanding about Chinese public opinion.

Hu said the embassy set up a microblog days later, when the microblog was still a new thing in China.

Cameron's visit elicits positive response

The US embassy isn't the only foreign department in China using the microblog to promote itself. The British embassy won praise for Prime Minister David Cameron's visit thanks to the microblog.

The British embassy's microblog on Sina.com had live feeds of Cameron leading the country's biggest ever delegation to China in the middle of November.

The microblog broadcast, titled "Prime Minister's 48 hours in China," with videos and photos, created a stir among Chinese netizens. It attracted more than 30,000 fans in two days.

Some firsthand accounts of Cameron's visit came straight from the microblog.

Netizens saw a side of Cameron they wouldn't have through official reports: him eating a hamburger, for instance.

Many people welcomed the efforts made by the embassy. The microblog received thousands of messages in two days.

"This is the first time that microblogging has been done so closely with a head of state. You have changed my view on politics. I'm now falling in love with the UK," one netizen wrote. He added, "I wish Chinese officials could



The US embassy in Beijing was the first foreign embassy to open a microblog in China.

CFP Photos

use social media tools too."

The Greek and Australian embassies and the French Cultural Center all have microblogs.

One official from a European embassy said, "At first we wanted to open a blog, but we found that blogs don't work well. Microblogs are more people-friendly."

A great promotional tool

"A glimpse into such a significant meeting of two countries' top leaders via an online platform is still rarely seen in China," said Gao Song, the online marketing officer of the Cultural and Education Department for the British embassy. "It's our new attempt to extend grassroots diplomacy."

About Cameron's visit, Gao said, "The intention of the program was to report his visit in a more detailed and casual way, providing useful information and interesting anecdotes that are easy for netizens to accept."

"A lot of views shared on the microblog helped us look deeper into Chinese people's attitudes toward certain issues

and their hopes concerning the relationship between the two countries," Gao said. "They constitute an important data source, acting as a reference for making our services better meet people's needs."

Gao is mainly responsible for administering and issuing microblogs concerning cultural and education issues.

He normally spends two hours a day maintaining the microblog. Gao said the content mainly falls into three categories: news from popular newspapers in Britain, the events that his department recently held and hot information related to the UK.

Gao said he tries his best to respond to citizens that leave thoughtful messages.

"Since establishing the microblog last year, we've seen the great effect it's had in promoting our embassy and Britain," Gao said.

A model for local governments

When Sina.com, the largest Web portal in China, launched its microblog in August 2009, the concept was still new and unfamiliar for most Chinese people. However, microblogs

experienced explosive growth in just one year, with the number of microblog operators, registered users and visitors increasing exponentially.

By the end of October 2010, more than 125 million people in China had microblogs, with 65 million using them regularly, according to a report released by Shanghai Jiaotong University last October.

The university predicts the number of China's microblog users will spike around 2012 and 2013, at which point the market will mature.

Microblogs have greatly increased the voice of the Chinese public. However, they've yet to facilitate communication between the government and citizenry.

Xie Gengyun, a writer of the Jiaotong University report, said local governments have yet to realize microblogs can be a useful tool for their work.

He suggested that the government focus on developing its information channels by using microblogs to curb the negative effects of false rumors.

Buangan said many governments get information from limited sources, which will make them make judgments and decisions without comprehensive consideration.

"China has many other voices. The government should seek more representative opinions," he said.

"The relationship between the government and public opinion should be mutual interaction," he said, adding that microblogs provide a great channel for governments to collect different opinions from the public and show themselves in a good way.



US ambassador to China Jon Huntsman Jr. (right)

Photo provided by US embassy



Many firsthand accounts of Cameron's visit came from the British embassy's microblog.

... continued from page 16



Zeitgeist of China

He Jianwei, editor of Center Stage, Book and Weekend

Since last month, a video called "Experience China" has been playing on screens at Times Square. It features Chinese celebrities, including pianist Lang Lang, basketball player Yao Ming and astronaut Yang Liwei.

When I first read the news, I thought many of them could represent one aspect of modern China. But could we call them the zeitgeist of this country? I'm not sure.

Celebrities may influence trends, but it's the common people who truly define a place in a period of time. And so it is that as editor of Center Stage, Book and Weekend, most of my coverage is about cultural events starring people you may not necessarily have heard about before – but should get to know.

In the past year, we covered stories about artists whose studios were faced with demolition, filmmakers whose subjects are migrant workers and writers who rethink urbanization.

Maybe they are not as famous as those who appeared in the Times Square's video, but their stories are equally valuable to our understanding of this country.

This year, I will keep my eyes trained on those people, whose mostly unseen experiences are a sign of the times.



We are at the crossroads of a significant period

Wang Yu, editor of Trend

The most interesting part about working as a journalist is meeting people with different views of the world. Some are optimistic, others cynical; some just want to live in peace while others crave adventure. Together, these people make up the city we live in and generate the energy that pushes Beijing forward – at extremely high speeds.

It's inevitable that in a city of excitement, it would be the nightclubs, rock clubs, fashion shows and art events that lure hordes of young people, whose motivations stretch the entire gamut. I know a fashion editor who comes from a small city in the south who pretends to be gay so he can hang out late in the clubs; he takes photos and uploads them onto his microblog for self-promotion.

As a reporter, it's hard not to get swept up in all this. But while I have to write about progress, at the same time I realize the importance of being oneself: wear what fits, listen to music that touches your soul, admire those who make a stand and not just follow others.

Trend isn't about doing what everyone else is; it's about blazing trails for others to follow. I believe *Beijing Today* will insist on this philosophy in the next 10 years.

Getting to know your surroundings will make your life easier

Liang Meilan, reporter

As an outsider working in the capital, the biggest challenge for me is integrating myself into the flow of this enormous city. When I first arrived, I had few friends and always felt like a stranger. I was often duped – by street vendors and realtors – and that soured my impression of this city.

But as time went on, I got more access to the local media and found community events to participate in. I became more sociable. I frequently attend pastry workshops now and hiking groups, and I've come to enjoy Beijing.

Knowledge is key to newcomers. As a reporter, I try to explore as many interesting and valuable community events as possible for expats and young city dwellers, because finding the community that's right for you is very important to enjoying the Beijing experience.

Culture, art, environment, education, lifestyle, nightlife, sports, health and more – whichever topic you might be interested in, you can find recommendations in *Beijing Today*. Give us a try.



Fabulous shopping and dining in the nation's capital

Annie Wei, editor of Food, Shopping and Community

The day before interviewing fashion consumer Xiao Hui, I was at a nice restaurant's food-tasting event with a young, chic and smart female editor.

When we started gossiping, she recalled how she got angry at a manager from one of the Qianmen 23 restaurants who asked to read her story before it was to be published. It just so happens that restaurant has since closed.

"What was she thinking? Just because the restaurant invited us to taste the food she thought she could control what we wrote?" my friend said.

It's a new time indeed, when food journalists are able to stand up to restaurants and offer objective opinions. Reporters and editors are getting younger, and more are going experience abroad; they are less influenced by state-owned media organizations and tend to be a little more edgy.

But lack of creativity and originality remains a problem. When Xiao and I chatted about fashion consumption, he said that international luxury brands in China did not actually offer quality service. In other words, there was very little luxurious about these "luxury brands."

How do we ask more out of our small and original local brands? How do we use e-commerce? How does one find, with so many options, quality items at reasonable prices?

These are the questions I seek to answer in the food and shopping pages in this coming year.

We strive to be a home for readers

The municipal government started it. Beijing Youth Daily Group kept it up. And now we, a group of young people in our 20s and early-30s, are the custodians of this paper, and it's our objective to keep *Beijing Today* going strong.

This is our first issue in the new lunar year, and we'd like to share our resolution: to encourage our writers and editors to be more creative and aggressive, to find new stories and to bring you notable events and restaurants and products that have fallen under the radar, to make this paper worthy of our fantastic city. We encourage you, our readers, to give us feedback about what we should be doing or could do better, because after all, we write for you.

On that note, this issue will introduce ways to not only survive in this cosmopolitan city of ours, but thrive. From all of us, best wishes for a happy and productive 2011.

In-depth feature stories reveal the city's secrets

Chu Meng, reporter

Each year, *Beijing Today* brings you 100 in-depth feature stories aimed at helping you understand more about the city and its people. We're committed to burrowing deeper to find the bright and dark sides of social transformation, conflicts and confusion about cultural diversity, the city's achievements through trial-and-error, and what people have learned in their struggles with injustice.

Hopefully, when you get a more rounded sense of the city, you'll begin seeing it differently: as home.



Share your stories with us!

Han Manman, editor of News

Ten years ago, *Beijing Today* created a page called "Expat news" aimed at reporting news from expat communities in town. At the time, most of the stories focused on foreign celebrities, partly because to be a foreigner in this city made you, almost by default for many in the local media, a celebrity.

Things have changed dramatically. Our pages have reflected this with a number of design modifications. We have never stopped searching for an answer to its essential question: what does it mean to be an expat in Beijing?

Well, here's the answer we've settled on: you. Yes, you. We hope to hear more interesting stories from people like you. We hope you can share your experiences: whether it's volunteering for a charity, starting a business, the feeling of culture shock or just the experience of walking around on the streets, contact me at hanmanman@ynet.com.



Integrating you with the community

Li Zhixin, editor of Health

In the Year of the Rabbit, we will continue to bring you valuable information that can bring you closer to the city and its people.

In the last decade, *Beijing Today* has written about hundreds of expats who live, work or simply visit the city. The stories about their experiences can help you understand the place you live, including its people, culture and customs.

I hope *Beijing Today* will help even more expats immerse themselves in the local community.

Enjoy your trip in China

Zhang Dongya, editor of Travel

Tepid singer Han Xiao once wrote a pop song called "I wanna travel to Guilin." One part goes: "I wanna travel to Guilin, but I have no money when I have time. I wanna travel to Guilin, but I have no time when I have money."

In the early 1990s, travel was still a luxury to most. Now, it's become a hobby for many. But where are the right places to go?

We would like to offer travel experiences and pictures to help inspire your next trip. Most of our focus will be on places around Beijing and neighboring provinces, but occasionally we'll introduce an exotic place in a remote corner of China that you just can't miss.

Hope you enjoy it. Catch you on the other side!

Continued on page 15 ...